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SIPDIS

DEPT PASS TO USTR- AGAMA, USTDA - FITTS/MARIN  
DEPT PASS TO USAID AFR/SD FOR MICHAEL CURTIS AND ATWOOD  
BAGHDAD FOR INL MCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ABUJA ECON SECTION NATIONAL DAY OUTREACH TO  
SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

¶1. Summary: Led by Deputy Chief of Mission, EconStaff sponsored outreach events on February 16, 2009, as part of U.S. National Day celebration week, held in February because July is the rainy season, at the African School of Excellence (ASE) in Suleja, Niger State. DCM also delivered a lecture on the U.S. economy EconStaff staged an economic challenge game with teams of high school students. EconStaff assisted by providing copies of the U.S. State Department electronic publication, "An Outline of the U.S. Economy" to help the faculty prepare the students. The students are children with special needs and street children that would otherwise not have an opportunity to attend school. ASE is a non profit nursery through grade 12 private school. Although lacking books and desks, students receive the basic "3Rs" -- reading, writing, and arithmetic --, which are taught orally and via a battered chalk board. The school's founder has been successfully teaching dialog skills for resolving conflict, with the support of volunteer members of the U.S. Mission. End Summary.

¶2. On February 16, 2009 Deputy Chief of Mission delivered a lecture on "How the United States of American Became the World's Largest Economy" to the African School of Excellence (ASE) in Suleja, Niger State as one of the outreach events surrounding the U.S. National Day celebration. The event was celebrated by an audience of over 500 composed of community leaders, parents, faculty, and students. The lecture was well received and was complemented by an Economic Challenge game with two teams from the high school students. EconStaff assisted the faculty by providing sufficient copies of the U.S. State Department electronic publication, "An Outline of the U.S. Economy". The questions in the challenge game were taken from this publication and a Mission judging team monitored each answer. The game showed how well prepared the students were for the challenge.

GETTING A CHANCE IN LIFE

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¶3. This school is just over one year old, with a population of over 1400. It was established by Enyi Augustine Abu in the Old Water Board Community area of Suleja to service children with special needs and was immediately expanded to include street children that would otherwise not have an opportunity to attend school. ASE is a non profit private school, without books or desks, where basic reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught orally and via a battered chalk board. The children are street gang members, petty traders, orphans, children of HIV/AIDS mothers and sex workers. The school teaches students from nursery to grade 12 and emphasizes craft skills, so the children learn a trade as well as academics.

¶4. The school's founder Abu has been successfully teaching dialog

skills for resolving conflict, with the support of volunteer members of the U.S. Mission, and students showed what they had learned by staging a debate centered on whether dialog or use of violence was the best way to solve problems. The performance of the debate and the dialog skill training were lauded by attending community officials.

¶5. School founder Abu noted that President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has provided support, treatment, and training for many of the ASE students orphaned by HIV/AIDS.

COMMENT

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¶6. The community serviced by ASE, like so many others throughout the country, is very poor and most residents make do on the equivalent of only a few dollars a day. Many of the children at the school receive only one meal per day and that food comes from a community garden that the children help tend. However, the energy and commitment of the students, and the school staff and teachers, is both touching and heartbreaking giving the dire circumstances of their daily lives.

¶7. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.

SANDERS